

METHOD OF TREATMENT USING INTERFERON-TAU

[0001] This application claims the benefit of U.S. Application No. 09/910,406, filed July 19, 2001, which claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/219,128, filed July 19, 2000. This application also claims the benefit of U.S. Application No. 10/346,269, filed January 16, 2003, which claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/349,658, filed January 16, 2002. Each of these documents is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

Field of the Invention

[0002] The present invention relates to pharmaceutical compositions containing interferon-tau and methods of uses thereof. More particularly, the invention relates to methods for treating conditions responsive to interferon-tau by orally administering interferon-tau in a dose sufficient to alter the blood level of 2', 5'-oligoadenylate synthetase.

Background of the Invention

[0003] Interferon-tau (hereinafter "IFN τ " or "interferon- τ ") was discovered originally as a pregnancy recognition hormone produced by the trophectoderm of ruminant conceptuses (Imakawa, K. et al, *Nature*, 330:377-379, (1987); Bazer, F.W. and Johnson, H.M., *Am. J. Repro. Immunol.*, 26:19-22, (1991)). The distribution of the IFN τ gene is restricted to ruminants, including cattle, sheep, and goats, (Alexenko, A.P. et al., *J. Interferon and Cytokine Res.*, 19:1335-1341, (1999)) but has been shown to have activity in cells belonging to other species including humans and mice (Pontzer, C.H. et al., *Cancer Res.*, 51:5304-5307, (1991); Alexenko, A.P. et al., *J. Interferon and Cytokine Res.*, 20:817-822, (2000)). For example, IFN τ has been demonstrated to possess antiviral, (Pontzer, C.H. et al., *Biochem. Biophys. Res. Commun.*, 152:801-807, (1988)), antiproliferative, (Pontzer, C.H., et al., 1991) and immunoregulatory activities (Assal-Meliani, A., *Am. J. Repro. Immunol.*, 33:267-275 (1995)).

[0004] While IFN τ displays many of the activities classically associated with type I IFNs, such as interferon- α and inteferon- β , considerable differences exist

between IFN τ and the other type I IFNs. The most prominent difference is the role of IFN τ in pregnancy in ruminant species. The other IFNs have no similar activity in pregnancy recognition. Also different is viral induction. All type I IFNs, except IFN τ , are induced readily by virus and dsRNA (Roberts, *et al.*, *Endocrine Reviews*, 13:432 (1992)). Induced IFN- α and IFN- β expression is transient, lasting approximately a few hours. In contrast, IFN τ synthesis, once induced, is maintained over a period of days (Godkin, *et al.*, *J. Reprod. Fert.*, 65:141 (1982)). On a per-cell basis, 300-fold more IFN- τ is produced than other type I IFNs (Cross, J.C. and Roberts, R.M., *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA* 88:3817-3821 (1991)).

[0005] Another difference lies in the amino acid sequences of IFN- τ and other type I interferons. The percent amino acid sequence similarity between the interferons α_{2b} , β_1 , ω_1 , γ , and τ are summarized in the table below.

	rHuIFN α_{2b}	rHuIFN β_1	rHuIFN ω_1	rHuIFN γ	rOvIFN τ
RhuIFN α_{2b}		33.1	60.8	11.6	48.8
RhuIFN β_1	33.1		33.1	12.2	33.8
RhuIFN ω_1	60.8	33.1		10.2	54.9
RhuIFN γ	11.6	12.2	10.2		10.2
rovIFN τ	48.8	33.8	54.9	10.2	

Sequence comparison determined from the following references:

Taniguchi *et al.*, *Gene*, 10(1):11 (1980).

Adolf *et al.*, *Biochim. Biophys. Acta*, 1089(2):167 (1991).

Streuli *et al.*, *Science*, 209:1343 (1980).

Imakawa *et al.*, *Nature*, 330:377 (1987).

[0006] Recombinant ovine IFN τ (rIFN τ) is 48.8 percent homologous to IFN α_{2b} and 33.8 percent homologous to IFN β_1 . Because of this limited homology between IFN τ and IFN α and between IFN τ and IFN β , it cannot be predicted whether or not IFN τ would behave in the same manner as IFN α or IFN β when administered orally. IFN τ is also reported to have a low receptor binding affinity for type I receptors on human cells (Brod, S., *J. Interferon and Cytokine Res.*, 18:841 (1999); Alexenko, A. *et al.*, *J. Interferon and Cytokine Res.*, 17:769 (1997)). Additionally, the fact that IFN τ is a non-endogeneous human protein generates the potential for systemic neutralizing antibody formation when IFN τ is introduced into the human body (Brod, S., *J. Interferon and Cytokine Res.*, 18:841 (1999). These

differences between IFN τ and the other interferons make it difficult to predict whether IFN τ when administered to a human will provide a therapeutic benefit. Teachings in the art relating to oral administration of IFN α , IFN β , or any other non-tau interferon, fail to provide a basis for drawing any expectations for IFN τ .

[0007] One limiting factor in the use of IFN τ , as well as proteins and polypeptides in general, as therapeutic agents is metabolism by plasma proteins when given parenterally. The oral route of administration is even more problematic due to proteolysis in the stomach, where the acidic conditions can destroy the molecule before reaching its intended target. For example, polypeptides and protein fragments, produced by action of gastric and pancreatic enzymes, are cleaved by exo- and endopeptidases in the intestinal brush border membrane to yield di- and tri-peptides. If proteolysis by pancreatic enzymes is avoided, polypeptides are subject to degradation by brush border peptidases. Polypeptides or proteins that might survive passage through the stomach are subject to metabolism in the intestinal mucosa where a penetration barrier prevents entry into cells. For this reason, much effort has been focused on delivering proteins to the oral-pharyngeal region in the form of a lozenge or solution held in the oral cavity for a period of time.

Summary of the Invention

[0008] Accordingly, it is an object of the invention to provide a method for treating a condition in a human subject that is responsive to interferon therapy.

[0009] It is another object of the invention to provide a method for treating such a condition by oral administration of IFN τ .

[0010] In one aspect, the invention includes a method for treating a condition responsive to interferon therapy in a human subject, by orally administering IFN τ to the intestinal tract of the subject in an amount effective to produce a measurable increase in the subject's serum 2', 5'-oligoadenylate synthetase (OAS) level, relative to the OAS level in the subject in the absence of IFN τ administration.

[0011] In one embodiment, the IFN τ is ovine IFN τ . In specific embodiments, the ovine IFN τ has a sequence identified herein as SEQ ID NO:2 or SEQ ID NO:3. More generally, the IFN τ has an amino acid sequence that is at least about 80% homologous with ovine IFN τ . The IFN τ can be a recombinantly produced IFN τ .

[0012] In another embodiment, the amount effective of IFN τ administered is a dosage of greater than about 1×10^5 units per day. The protein is administered over a period of time sufficient to achieve the increase in blood OAS level in the subject. In other embodiments, the amount effective is a dosage of greater than about 1×10^8 units per day.

[0013] In yet another embodiment, the IFN τ is administered to a subject suffering from an autoimmune disorder. The protein is administered to achieve the measurable increase in OAS over an extended period of time when the patient is symptomatic. In specific embodiments, the autoimmune condition is selected from multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis, lupus erythematosus, and type I diabetes mellitus.

[0014] The IFN τ , in another embodiment, is administered to a subject suffering from a viral infection. The protein is administered to achieve the measurable increase in OAS until the level of viral infection, as measured for example from a blood viral titer or from clinical observations of symptoms associated with the viral infection, is reduced. In specific embodiments, the viral infection is a DNA or RNA viral infection.

[0015] In another embodiment, the IFN τ is administered to a subject suffering from a condition characterized by cellular proliferation.

[0016] The IFN τ dosage form, in another embodiment, is one that delivers the protein predominantly to the small intestine. For example, the dosage form can be comprised of a mucoadhesive polymer that protects and/or stabilizes the protein from the intestinal environment. The mucoadhesive formulation enhances binding of the interferon to cells lining the intestinal wall.

[0017] The method can further include monitoring the serum OAS level to ascertain if the OAS level is increased as a result of administering IFN τ . In another embodiment, the amount of IFN τ administered to the patient is adjusted to achieve a measurable increase in blood OAS, relative to the level observed prior to administering oral IFN τ .

[0018] These and other objects and features of the invention will be more fully appreciated when the following detailed description of the invention is read in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

Brief Description of the Drawings

[0019] Fig. 1 shows blood OAS concentration, in pmol/dL, following intraperitoneal (i.p.) or gastric administration of IFN- τ to healthy mice.

[0020] Fig. 2 shows blood OAS concentration, in pmol/dL, upon gastric administration of IFN τ to mice at dosages of 1×10^3 U, 1×10^4 U, and 1×10^5 U.

[0021] Fig. 3 is a bar graph showing blood OAS concentration, in pmol/dL, in several mouse strains (ICR, BALB/c, C57BL, NZW/N and SJL/J) following peroral administration of IFN τ (10^5 U). Control mice received orally a solution of 10% maltose without IFN τ . Each bar represents the average \pm S.E. of one experiment (3~5 mice) of two performed, with similar results.

[0022] Figs. 4A-4B are bar graphs showing induction of blood OAS activity in mice after administration of IFN τ following a 6 hour fast. IFN τ was administered orally or via intraperitoneal injection. Fig. 4A shows blood OAS levels, expressed as a percentage of control, taken as blood OAS in mice treated with a solution of 10% maltose without interferon, in blood samples taken at time zero and at 8 hours, 16 hours, and 24 hours post IFN τ (10^5 U) administration. Fig. 4B shows blood OAS levels, expressed as a percentage of control, 24 hours after delivery of IFN τ at concentrations of 0, 10^2 , 10^3 , 10^4 , and 10^5 U. Each bar represents the average \pm S.E. of one experiment (three mice) of two performed, with similar results.

[0023] Figs. 5A-5D are bar graphs showing the effect of fasting conditions on the induction of blood OAS in mice by administration of IFN- τ . The induction of blood OAS is shown as a percentage of control, taken as blood OAS in mice treated with a solution of 10% maltose without interferon. Treated mice received 10^4 U of IFN τ (via intraperitoneal injection or oral administration) six hours after the indicated intake regimen: Fig. 5A, no food and no water; Fig. 5B, water without food; Fig. 5C, food without water; Fig. 5D, both food and water. Each bar represents the average \pm S.E. of one experiment (three mice) of two performed, with similar results.

[0024] Fig. 6 is a bar graph showing induction of blood OAS activity, expressed as a percentage of control, taken as blood OAS in mice treated with a solution of 10% maltose without interferon, by administration of murine IFN α (0, 10^2 , 10^3 and 10^4 IU) given to ICR mice orally or via intraperitoneal injection. The OAS activity in

blood was assayed 16 hours after IFN α administration. Each bar represents the average \pm S.E. of one experiment (three mice) of two performed, with similar results.

[0025] Figs. 7A-7C show the hepatitis C (HCV) RNA and alanine aminotransferase (ALT) levels in three human patients following oral administration of 4.9×10^8 Units/day IFN τ .

[0026] Fig. 8A-8B show the hepatitis C (HCV) RNA and alanine aminotransferase (ALT) levels in two human patients following oral administration of 1.5×10^9 Units/day IFN τ .

[0027] Fig. 9 shows the amount of IFN τ in NZW mouse sera after administration by either oral feeding (filled bars) or i.p. injection (open bars) as measured using an anti-viral assay.

[0028] Figs. 10A-10C show the prevention of chronic-relapsing experimental allergic encephalomyelitis (EAE) in SJL mice by orally-administered (Fig. 10C) and i.p.-injected (Fig. 10B) IFN τ as compared with mice receiving no treatment (Fig. 10A).

[0029] Figs. 11A-11C show sections of mouse spinal cord stained with cresyl violet for detection of lymphocyte infiltration from EAE-induced animals receiving either no IFN τ treatment (Fig. 11A), IFN τ treatment by i.p. injection (Fig. 11B), or IFN τ treatment by oral feeding (Fig. 11C).

[0030] Fig. 12 shows induction of IL-10 by either single-dose or prolonged IFN τ treatment administered by i.p. injection or oral feeding.

[0031] Fig. 13 shows relapse of EAE in SJL mice following removal of IFN τ treatment.

[0032] Fig. 14 shows ELISA detection of anti-IFN τ antibodies in the sera of IFN τ -treated mice following i.p. injection or oral feeding of IFN τ .

Brief Description of the Sequences

[0033] SEQ ID NO:1 is the nucleotide sequence of a synthetic gene encoding ovine interferon- τ (IFN τ).

[0034] SEQ ID NO:2 corresponds to an amino acid sequence of mature ovine interferon- τ (IFN τ ; oTP-1; GenBank Accession No. Y00287; PID g1358).

[0035] SEQ ID NO:3 corresponds to an amino acid sequence of mature ovine

IFN τ , where the amino acid residues at positions 5 and 6 of the sequence are modified relative to the sequence of SEQ ID NO:2.

[0036] SEQ ID NO:4 is a synthetic nucleotide sequence encoding the protein of SEQ ID NO:3.

Detailed Description of the Invention

I. Definitions

[0037] *Interferon-tau*, abbreviated as IFN τ or interferon- τ , refers to any one of a family of interferon proteins having at least one characteristic from each of the following two groups of characteristics: (i) (a) anti-luteolytic properties, (b) anti-viral properties, (c) anti-cellular proliferation properties; and (ii) about 45 to 68% amino acid homology with α -Interferons and greater than 70% amino acid homology to known IFN τ sequences (e.g., Ott, *et al.*, *J. Interferon Res.*, 11:357 (1991); Helmer, *et al.*, *J. Reprod. Fert.*, 79:83 (1987); Imakawa, *et al.*, *Mol. Endocrinol.*, 3:127 (1989); Whaley, *et al.*, *J. Biol. Chem.*, 269:10846 (1994); Bazer, *et al.*, WO 94/10313 (1994)). Amino acid homology can be determined using, for example, the LALIGN program with default parameters. This program is found in the FASTA version 1.7 suite of sequence comparison programs (Pearson and Lipman, *PNAS*, 85:2444 (1988); Pearson, *Methods in Enzymology*, 183:63 (1990); program available from William R. Pearson, Department of Biological Chemistry, Box 440, Jordan Hall, Charlottesville, VA). IFN τ sequences have been identified in various ruminant species, including but not limited to, cow (*Bovine sp.*, Helmer S.D., *J. Reprod. Fert.*, 79:83 (1987); Imakawa, K., *Mol. Endocrinol.*, 119:532 (1988)), sheep (*Ovine sp.*), musk ox (*Ovibos sp.*), giraffe (*Giraffa sp.*, GenBank Accession no. U55050), horse (*Equus caballus*), zebra (*Equus burchelli*, GenBank Accession no. NC005027), hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus sp.*), elephant (*Loxodonta sp.*), llama (*Llama glama*), goat (*Capra sp.*, GenBank Accession nos. AY357336, AY357335, AY347334, AY357333, AY357332, AY357331, AY357330, AY357329, AY357328, AY357327), and deer (*Cervidae sp.*). The nucleotide sequences of IFN τ for many of these species are reported in public databases and/or in the literature (see, for example, Roberts, R.M. *et al.*, *J. Interferon and Cytokine Res.*, 18:805 (1998), Leaman D.W. *et al.*, *J. Interferon Res.*, 12:1 (1993), Ryan, A.M. *et al.*, *Anim. Genet.*, 34:9 (1996)). The term "interferon-tau" intends to

encompass the interferon-tau protein from any ruminant species, exemplified by those recited above, that has at least one characteristic from each of the following two groups of characteristics listed above.

[0038] *Ovine IFN τ (IFN τ)* refers to a protein having the amino acid sequence as identified herein as SEQ ID NO:2, and to proteins having amino acid substitutions and alterations such as neutral amino acid substitutions that do not significantly affect the activity of the protein, such as the IFN τ protein identified herein as SEQ ID NO:3. More generally, an ovine IFN- τ protein is one having about 80%, more preferably 90%, sequence homology to the sequence identified as SEQ ID NO:2.

[0039] *Treating* a condition refers to administering a therapeutic substance effective to reduce the symptoms of the condition and/or lessen the severity of the condition.

[0040] *Oral* refers to any route that involves administration by the mouth or direct administration into the stomach or intestines, including gastric administration.

[0041] *Intestine* refers to the portion of the digestive tract that extends from the lower opening of the stomach to the anus, composed of the small intestine (duodenum, jejunum, and ileum) and the large intestine (ascending colon, transverse colon, descending colon, sigmoid colon, and rectum).

[0042] *OAS level* refers to the concentration or activity of blood 2', 5'-oligoadenylate synthetase (OAS) protein.

[0043] *ALT* refers to alanine aminotransferase.

[0044] *HCV* refers to hepatitis C.

II. Interferon- τ Compositions and Method of Treatment

A. Interferon- τ

[0045] The first IFN τ to be identified was ovine IFN τ (IFN τ), as a 18-19 kDa protein. Several isoforms were identified in conceptus (the embryo and surrounding membranes) homogenates (Martal, J., *et al.*, *J. Reprod. Fertil.* 56:63-73 (1979)). Subsequently, a low molecular weight protein released into conceptus culture medium was purified and shown to be both heat labile and susceptible to proteases (Godkin, J.D., *et al.*, *J. Reprod. Fertil.* 65:141-150 (1982)). IFN τ was originally called ovine trophoblast protein-one (oTP-1) because it was the primary

secretory protein initially produced by trophectoderm of the sheep conceptus during the critical period of maternal recognition in sheep. Subsequent experiments have determined that IFN τ is a pregnancy recognition hormone essential for establishment of the physiological response to pregnancy in ruminants, such as sheep and cows (Bazer, F.W., and Johnson, H.M., *Am. J. Reprod. Immunol.* 26:19-22 (1991)).

[0046] An IFN τ cDNA obtained by probing a sheep blastocyst library with a synthetic oligonucleotide representing the N-terminal amino acid sequence (Imakawa, *et al.*, 1987) has a predicted amino acid sequence that is 45-55% homologous with IFN- α s from human, mouse, rat, and pig and 70% homologous with bovine IFN- α II, now referred to as IFN- Ω . Several cDNA sequences have been reported which may represent different isoforms (Stewart, H.J., *et al.*, *Mol. Endocrinol.* 2:65 (1989); Klemann, S.W., *et al.*, *Nuc. Acids Res.* 18:6724 (1990); and Charlier, M., *et al.*, *Mol. Cell Endocrinol.* 76:161-171 (1991)). All are approximately 1kb with a 585 base open reading frame that codes for a 23 amino acid leader sequence and a 172 amino acid mature protein. The predicted structure of IFN- τ as a four helical bundle with the amino and carboxyl-termini in apposition further supports its classification as a type I IFN (Jarpe, M.A., *et al.*, *Protein Engineering* 7:863-867 (1994)).

Overview of the Interferons

Aspects	Type I	Type I	Type I	Type II
Types	α & ω	β	τ	γ
Produced by:	leukocyte	fibroblast	trophoblast	lymphocyte
Antiviral	+	+	+	+
Antiproliferative	+	+	+	+
Pregnancy Signaling	-	-	+	-

[0047] While IFN- τ displays some of the activities classically associated with type I IFNs (see Table, above), considerable differences exist between it and the other type I IFNs. The most prominent difference is its role in pregnancy, detailed above. Also different is viral induction. All type I IFNs, except IFN τ , are induced readily by virus and dsRNA (Roberts, R.M., *et al.*, *Endocrin. Rev.* 13:432-452

(1992)). Induced IFN- α and IFN- β expression is transient, lasting approximately a few hours. In contrast, IFN- τ synthesis, once induced, is maintained over a period of days (Godkin, *et al.*, 1982). On a per-cell basis, 300-fold more IFN- τ is produced than other type I IFNs (Cross, J.C., and Roberts, R.M., *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA* 88:3817-3821 (1991)).

[0048] Other differences may exist in the regulatory regions of the IFN τ gene. For example, transfection of the human trophoblast cell line JAR with the gene for bovine IFN τ resulted in antiviral activity while transfection with the bovine IFN- Ω gene did not. This implies unique transacting factors involved in IFN τ gene expression. Consistent with this is the observation that while the proximal promoter region (from 126 to the transcriptional start site) of IFN τ is highly homologous to that of IFN- α and IFN- β ; the region from -126 to -450 is not homologous and enhances only IFN τ expression (Cross, J.C., and Roberts, R.M., *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA* 88:3817-3821 (1991)). Thus, different regulatory factors appear to be involved in IFN τ expression as compared with the other type I IFNs.

[0049] The 172 amino acid sequence of ovine-IFN τ is set forth, for example, in U.S. Patent No. 5,958,402, and its homologous bovine-IFN τ sequence is described, for example, in Helmer *et al.*, *J. Reprod. Fert.*, 79:83-91 (1987) and Imakawa, K. *et al.*, *Mol. Endocrinol.*, 3:127 (1989). The sequences of ovine-IFN τ and bovine-IFN τ from these references are hereby incorporated by reference. The amino acid sequence of ovine IFN τ is shown herein as SEQ ID NO:2.

1. Isolation of IFN- τ

[0050] IFN τ may be isolated from conceptuses collected from pregnant sheep and cultured *in vitro* in a modified minimum essential medium as described by Godkin, J.D., *et al.*, *J. Reprod. Fert.*, 65:141-150 (1982) and Vallet, J.L., *et al.*, *Biol. Reprod.*, 37:1307 (1987). The IFN τ may be purified from the conceptus cultures by ion exchange chromatography and gel filtration. The homogeneity of isolated IFN τ may be assessed by sodium dodecyl sulfate polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis (Maniatis, T., *et al.*, in MOLECULAR CLONING: A LABORATORY MANUAL, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, Cold Spring Harbor, NY (1982); Ausubel, F.M., *et al.*, in CURRENT PROTOCOLS IN MOLECULAR BIOLOGY,

John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Media, PA (1988)), and determination of protein concentration in purified IFN τ samples may be performed using the bicinchoninic (BCA) assay (Pierce Chemical Co., Rockford, IL; Smith, P.K., *et al.*, *Anal. Biochem.* 150:76 (1985)).

2. Recombinant Production of IFN τ

[0051] Recombinant IFN τ protein may be produced from any selected IFN τ polynucleotide fragment using a suitable expression system, such as bacterial or yeast cells. The isolation of IFN τ nucleotide and polypeptide sequences is described in PCT publication WO/94/10313, which is incorporated by reference herein.

[0052] To make an IFN τ expression vector, an IFN τ coding sequence (e.g., SEQ ID NOS:1 or 4) is placed in an expression vector, e.g., a bacterial expression vector, and expressed according to standard methods. Examples of suitable vectors include lambda gt11 (Promega, Madison WI); pGEX (Smith, P.K. *et al.*, *Anal. Biochem.* 150:76 (1985)); pGEMEX (Promega); and pBS (Stratagene, La Jolla CA) vectors. Other bacterial expression vectors containing suitable promoters, such as the T7 RNA polymerase promoter or the tac promoter, may also be used. Cloning of the IFN τ synthetic polynucleotide into a modified pIN III omp-A expression vector is described in the Materials and Methods.

[0053] For the studies described herein, the IFN τ coding sequence present in SEQ ID NO:4 was cloned into a vector, suitable for transformation of yeast cells, containing the methanol-regulated alcohol oxidase (AOX) promoter and a Pho1 signal sequence. The vector was used to transform *P. pastoris* host cells and transformed cells were used to express the protein according to the manufacturer's instructions (Invitrogen, San Diego, CA).

[0054] Other yeast vectors suitable for expressing IFN τ for use with methods of the present invention include 2 micron plasmid vectors (Ludwig, D.L. *et al.*, *Gene*, 132:33 (1993)), yeast integrating plasmids (Shaw, K.J. *et al.*, *DNA*, 7:117 (1988)), YEP vectors (Shen, L.P. *et al.*, *Sci. Sin.*, 29:856 (1986)), yeast centromere plasmids (YCps), and other vectors with regulatable expression (Hitzeman, R.A. *et al.*, U.S. Patent No. 4,775,622, issued October 4, 1988; Rutter, W.J. *et al.*, U.S. Patent No. 4,769, 238, issued September 6, 1988; Oeda, K. *et al.*, U.S. Patent

No. 4,766,068, issued August 23, 1988). Preferably, the vectors include an expression cassette containing an effective yeast promoter, such as the MF α 1 promoter (Bayne, M.L. *et al.*, *Gene* 66:235-244 (1988), GADPH promoter (glyceraldehyde-3-phosphate-dehydrogenase; Wu, D.A. *et al.*, *DNA*, 10:201 (1991)) or the galactose-inducible GAL10 promoter (Ludwig, D.L. *et al.*, *Gene*, 132:33 (1993); Feher, Z. *et al.*, *Curr. Genet.*, 16:461 (1989)); Shen, L.P. *et al.*, *Sci. Sin.*, 29:856 (1986)). The yeast transformation host is typically *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, however, as illustrated above, other yeast suitable for transformation can be used as well (e.g., *Schizosaccharomyces pombe*, *Pichia pastoris* and the like).

[0055] Further, a DNA encoding an IFN τ polypeptide can be cloned into any number of commercially available vectors to generate expression of the polypeptide in the appropriate host system. These systems include the above described bacterial and yeast expression systems as well as the following: baculovirus expression (Reilly, P.R. *et al.*, BACULOVIRUS EXPRESSION VECTORS: A LABORATORY MANUAL, (1992); Beames *et al.*, *Biotechniques*, 11:378 (1991); Clontech, Palo Alto CA); plant cell expression, transgenic plant expression, and expression in mammalian cells (Clontech, Palo Alto CA; Gibco-BRL, Gaithersburg MD). The recombinant polypeptides can be expressed as fusion proteins or as native proteins. A number of features can be engineered into the expression vectors, such as leader sequences which promote the secretion of the expressed sequences into culture medium. The recombinantly produced polypeptides are typically isolated from lysed cells or culture media. Purification can be carried out by methods known in the art including salt fractionation, ion exchange chromatography, and affinity chromatography. Immunoaffinity chromatography can be employed, as described above, using antibodies generated based on the IFN τ polypeptides.

[0056] In addition to recombinant methods, IFN τ proteins or polypeptides can be isolated from selected cells by affinity-based methods, such as by using appropriate antibodies. Further, IFN τ peptides (e.g. SEQ ID NOS:2 or 3) may be chemically synthesized using methods known to those skilled in the art.

B. Oral Administration of IFN τ

[0057] In studies performed in support of the invention, IFN- τ was administered orally to mice and to humans and the induction of 2',5'-oligoadenylate synthetase (OAS) activity, a recognized marker of IFN action (Shindo, M. et al., *Hepatology* 8:366-370, (1988)), in whole blood was monitored. These studies will now be described.

1. Administration of IFN τ to Mice

[0058] In studies performed in support of the present invention, IFN τ , administered orally, was tested for its ability to induce OAS. As described in Example 1, IFN τ was administered either orally or intraperitoneally (i.p.) to mice. OAS activity in whole blood 24 hours after IFN τ administration was determined, and the results are shown in Fig. 1.

[0059] Fig. 1 shows the OAS blood concentration, in pmol/dL, for the control animals treated with a saline containing 10% maltose was just over 1,000 pmol/dL. Mice treated with 5×10^8 Units of IFN τ in a solution of saline containing 10% maltose intraperitoneally had an OAS blood level of about 1700 pmol/dL. Mice treated with the same IFN τ dosage orally had a blood OAS level of about 2000 pmol/dL.

[0060] In another study, detailed in Example 2, IFN τ was administered orally in mice to determine its ability to induce OAS in a dose-dependent manner. IFN τ was orally administered in units of 0 (control), 1×10^3 , 1×10^4 , 1×10^5 to the upper part of the stomach in test mice. Twelve hours after oral administration, whole blood was taken from the heart and OAS concentration was determined. As shown in Fig. 2, the OAS concentration in whole blood increased in a dose dependent manner.

[0061] Example 3 describes further studies conducted on mice. In these studies before administration of IFN τ , mice were deprived of food and drink for at least six hours and IFN τ was given by orally or by intraperitoneal (i.p.) injection. When administered orally, IFN τ was introduced directly into the upper part of the stomach using an oral feeding needle.

[0062] Fig. 3 shows the effects of gastric administration of IFN τ on the induction of OAS activity in blood in a variety of mouse strains: ICR, BALB/c, C57BL/9,

NZW/N and SJL/J. All test mice were treated orally with IFN τ (10^5 U). Control mice received orally a solution of 10% maltose without IFN τ . Each bar represents the average \pm S.E. of one experiment (3~5 mice) of two performed, with similar results. As seen in Fig. 3, the level of OAS activity in all mouse strains increased following peroral administration of IFN τ , though the extent of the increase varied with the strain. The level of activity induced in ICR, C57BL/9 and NZW/N mice was higher than that in BALB/c and SJL/J mice.

[0063] In another study, OAS activity was monitored as a function of time after administration of IFN τ . In this study, animals (ICR mice) were subjected to a six hour fast (water but no food) prior to administration of IFN τ (10^5 U). Blood was sampled at 8 hours, 16 hours, and 24 hours post IFN- τ administration. The results are shown in Fig. 4A.

[0064] Fig. 4A shows blood OAS levels, expressed as a percentage of control mice, treated with the saline/10% maltose vehicle, in blood samples taken at the indicated time intervals post IFN τ administration. In Fig. 4A, each bar represents the average \pm S.E. of one experiment (three mice) of two performed, with similar results. OAS activity in whole blood increased in a time-dependent manner regardless of the route, oral or i.p. injection, however, a higher level was observed at the 24 hour time point after oral administration than i.p. injection.

[0065] In another study, IFN τ at varying concentrations (0, 10^2 , 10^3 , 10^4 and 10^5 U), was given to mice following a six hour fast. Blood was obtained after 24 hours, and OAS activity was assayed. The results are shown in Fig. 4B.

[0066] Fig. 4B shows blood OAS levels, expressed as a percentage of control mice 24 hours after delivery of IFN τ at concentrations of 0, 10^2 , 10^3 , 10^4 , and 10^5 U. Each bar represents the average \pm S.E. of one experiment (3 mice) of two performed, with similar results. Following i.p. injection, the level of activity was rather high at a low dose (10^2 U), and saturated at higher doses of IFN- τ (10^4 and 10^5 U). In contrast, the level of activity after p.o. administration increased dose-dependently.

[0067] The data in Figs. 4A-4B shows that IFN- τ administered orally induces a higher level of blood OAS activity than that induced by i.p. injection. In particular, the orally-induced blood OAS levels were higher than the blood OAS levels

induced by i.p. injection at IFN- τ dosages of greater than about 10^3 U and at post administration times of greater than about 8 hours.

[0068] In another study, the effect of fasting conditions on the induction of blood OAS in mice by administration of IFN- τ was evaluated. In this study, mice were subjected to a defined food and water intake regimen for six hours. After the six hour regimen, 10^4 U of IFN τ was administered by oral gavage or by intraperitoneal injection, along with food and water. The intake regimens were as follows: Case I, neither food nor water was given; Case II, water but no food was given; Case III, only food was given; Case IV, both food and water were given. Whole blood was obtained from the heart at 24 hours and levels of OAS activity were determined. The results are shown in Figs. 5A-5D.

[0069] Figs. 5A-5D correspond to the mice subjected to Case I-Case IV food and water intake regimens defined in the paragraph above, respectively. The results in Figs. 5A-5D show the induction of blood OAS expressed as a percentage of control, taken as blood OAS in mice treated with a solution of 10% maltose without interferon. The results show that higher blood OAS levels are induced by oral administration of IFN- τ to subjects in a fasted state, as seen best in Fig. 5A and Fig. 5B for mice receiving no food.

[0070] In this study, it was observed that almost the same amounts of food were ingested with or without a supply of water. Water intake, however, was lower without food (case I and case II) than with food (case III and case IV). In some animals, after fasting for six hours, a 0.2 mL maltose solution containing blue dye was given orally and the distribution of the dye in the stomach and intestine was examined (data not shown). Following the ingestion of food (case III and case IV), the stomachs of mice swelled and the dye localized mainly in the stomach, probably because the food absorbed the dye. However, the dye was transferred quickly to the intestine when no food was ingested. This observation suggests that IFN τ taken orally may exert its effect in the intestine to induce high levels of OAS activity in blood.

[0071] A comparative study was done to measure the effect of oral administration of MuIFN- α on blood OAS levels. In this study, ICR mice were treated with varying concentrations (0, 10^2 , 10^3 and 10^4 IU) of MuIFN- α by either the p.o. or i.p. route. OAS activity in blood obtained 16 hours after MuIFN- α

administration was assayed. The results are shown in Fig. 6, where each bar represents the average \pm S.E. of one experiment (3 mice) of two performed, with similar results.

[0072] Fig. 6 is a bar graph showing induction of blood OAS activity, expressed as a percentage of control mice, following administration of MuIFN α (0, 10^2 , 10^3 and 10^4 IU) given orally or via intraperitoneal injection. The level of OAS activity was increased dose-dependently by either route of administration, with i.p. injection resulting in better induction of blood OAS activity than p.o. administration. This result is the opposite of that observed with IFN τ , where oral administration of IFN τ achieved a higher blood OAS level than intraperitoneal injection of IFN τ . Moreover, the body temperature of mice rose slightly when MuIFN α was administered, but not when IFN τ was used (data not shown).

[0073] The data presented in Figs. 1-6 provide evidence that IFN τ administered to the intestinal tract induces or upregulates the 2,5 A response *in vivo*. Although oral administration of IFN τ has been previously reported in the literature (see for example WO 96/28183), no study has shown that this non-endogenous interferon would be capable upon oral administration of inducing the OAS response. In the present studies, IFN τ was directly administered into the intestinal tract, without contact to the *tunica mucosa oris*, thereby ruling out any absorption in the oropharyngeal region. Direct absorption of IFN τ from the stomach would diminish antibody formation against IFN τ compared to IFN τ absorbed through the oral mucosal membrane, particularly in the case of chronic administrations of IFN τ .

2. Administration to Humans Suffering from Hepatitis C

[0074] Human patients infected with hepatitis C were recruited for a study. The patients were divided into four test groups for treatment with oral IFN τ (SEQ ID NO:4). As described in Example 4, each subject in the test groups self-administered three times daily a controlled volume of a 1 mg/mL solution of IFN τ . Patients in Test Groups I, II, III, and IV received a total daily dose of 1 mg IFN τ , 3 mg IFN τ , 9 mg IFN τ , and 15 mg IFN τ , respectively. The patients returned to the test clinic at defined intervals to provide a blood sample for analysis of (i) 2',5'-oligoadenylate synthetase (OAS) levels (a) in the serum and (b) in the peripheral blood mononuclear cells; (ii)

alanine aminotransferase (ALT) levels; and (iii) viral titer level (hepatitis C RNA copies per mL).

[0075] The results for some subjects in each test group are shown in Tables 3-5 below, and graphically in Figs. 7-8. Tables 3A-3B present data for six patients in Dose Group I, treated with 0.33 mg oral IFN τ three times daily. Serum 2-5 OAS levels, in pmol/dL, are indicated in the column identified as "2-5A (Serum)". Two of the subjects, PAB/001 and JRJ/006, experienced no increase in blood OAS levels. The other four subjects had a measurable increase in blood OAS level, with subjects identified as MSM/002 and LER/004 showing a significant increase. Subject MSM/002 had a baseline OAS level of 11.0 pmol/dL. By test day 15, this had increased to 51.5, a more than four fold increase. Subject Z-I/005 had a baseline OAS level of 43.4 pmol/dL. The OAS level increased, reaching 74.8 pmol/dL by test day 29.

[0076] Table 4 presents the data for three patients in Dose Group II, treated with 1 mg IFN τ three times daily. Patients AMC/007 and DBF/012 responded to IFN τ treatment, with significantly increased blood OAS levels. For example, patient AMC/007 had a baseline OAS level of 11.2 pmol/dL. This increased steadily over the first 29 days of treatment, with a maximum of 120 pmol/dL measured on test day 29. OAS levels remained more than four-fold over the baseline level throughout test day 71. Patient DBF/012 had an initial OAS level of 28.8 pmol/dL, prior to treatment. This level increased and decreased over the 71 day treatment period, with high measurements on days 15 and 71 of over 100 pmol/dL. Between 8 and 71 an increase of at least 1.5 fold was observed.

[0077] Table 5 presents the data for three subjects in Dose Group II, treated with 3 mg IFN τ three times daily. Baseline levels of blood OAS were taken on day of the study. Subject CLR/011 had a marginal response in terms of increased blood OAS level. Subject HCM/010 shows about a 1.5 fold increase in blood OAS level, and subject VCC/009 had a more than 4-fold increased in blood OAS level at test day 29.

[0078] The data in Tables 3-5 illustrate the varied response of individuals suffering from viral hepatitis C to oral IFN τ . Many patients had an increased blood OAS level, typically a 1.5 fold increase in blood OAS over initial baseline levels, often a two-fold increase, and in some cases, a four-fold increase. The response

of each patient is dependent on a number of factors including the state of the infection and individualized bodily responses to treatment. Accordingly, the invention contemplates administration of IFN τ orally to a patient in need of treatment, where the dose of IFN τ is selected to achieve an increased blood OAS level for that particular patient. Dosage selection can be done, for example, by monitoring blood OAS levels periodically (e.g, prior to treatment and at intervals following initiation of treatment). The dose of IFN τ is adjusted as needed for that particular patient to achieve the desired increased blood OAS or until a measurable increase in blood OAS levels is observed, relative to the level observed prior to treatment. Preferably, at least a 1.5 fold increase is achieved, more preferably at least a two-fold increase, even more preferably a three-fold increase.

[0079] Figs. 7-8 present the data for viral titer and alanine aminotransferase (ALT) levels for several of the patients in the study. Alanine aminotransferase is a serum enzyme that catalyzes the transfer of the γ -keto group of alanine to the γ -keto group of ketoglutarate, leading to the formation of oxaloacetic acid and pyruvic acid. ALT is found primarily in the liver, and patients suffering from a liver disease, such as hepatitis C, have an elevated ALT level in the blood (HARRISON'S PRINCIPLES OF INTERNAL MEDICINE, Wilson *et al.*, Eds., 12th Editions, Part Nine, page 1309, (1991)). A healthy person has a serum ALT level of about 1-45 U/L. Figs. 7A-7C show the hepatitis C (HCV) RNA viral titer (shaded bars) and alanine aminotransferase (ALT) levels (diamonds) in three patients in Dose Group I, patients PAB/001 (Fig. 7A), MSM/002 (Fig. 7B), and DMA/003 (Fig. 7C), following oral administration of 4.9×10^8 Units/day (0.33 mg t.i.d.) IFN τ . Patients MSM/002 and DMA/003 (Figs. 7B, 7C) had a continual decrease in ALT level over the 169 day treatment period. Patient PAB/001 (Fig. 7A) showed a more varied ALT blood level with some increases, but had an overall decrease in ALT level as a result of IFN τ treatment.

[0080] Figs. 8A-8B show the hepatitis C (HCV) RNA and alanine aminotransferase (ALT) levels in patients AMC/007 (Fig. 8A) and VCC/009 (Fig. 8B) in Dose Group II, treated with 1.5×10^9 Units/day (1.0 mg t.i.d.) oral IFN τ . The two patients responded differently, with VCC/009 showing an initial increase in ALT in the first week of treatment, and then a continual decline in ALT level from

about day 8 to day 113.

[0081] It will be appreciated that for some patients and for some conditions, administration of IFN τ in combination with another therapeutic agent is contemplated. For example, combination of IFN τ with other recognized hepatitis anti-viral agents may be beneficial in some patients. More generally, combination of IFN τ with any known pharmaceutical agent is contemplated.

3. Administration of IFN τ to Mice with Experimental Allergic Encephalomyelitis

[0082] Oral administration of IFN τ for treatment of autoimmune disorders was illustrated in another study using a recognized model for multiple sclerosis. This study evaluates the efficacy of IFN τ in treating autoimmune disorders in general, by evaluating the response in rodents with experimental allergic encephalomyelitis (EAE; Zamvil, S.S. *et al.*, *Ann. Rev. Immunol.*, 8:579-621 (1990)), an animal model of antigen-induced autoimmunity. EAE resembles human multiple sclerosis (MS) both in its clinical and pathological manifestations and can thus be used to assess treatments for human autoimmune diseases such as MS. EAE is a T-cell-mediated inflammatory autoimmune demyelinating disease induced by immunizing susceptible mouse, rat or guinea pig strains with myelin basic protein (MBP) or with encephalitogenic peptide fragments. Genetic susceptibility in the model animal strains is based in part on the capacity of encephalitogenic peptides to bind to particular class II major histocompatibility complex (MHC-II) molecules (Fritz, R.B., *et al.*, *J. Immunol.* 130(3):1024-1026 (1983); Wraith, D.C., *et al.*, *Cell* 59:247 (1989)). In particular, mice having the H-2^u haplotype are susceptible to EAE. Susceptible mouse strains include PL/J mice (Klein, J., *et al.*, *Immunogenetics* 17:553 (1983)), (PL/J \times SJL)F₁ mice (Zamvil, S.S. *et al.*, *Ann. Rev. Immunol.*, 8:579-621 (1990); Wraith, *et al.*, 1989), B10.PL mice (Figuro, F., *et al.*, *Immunogenetics* 15(4):399-404 (1982)), NZW mice (Kotzin, B.L., *et al.*, *J. Exp. Med.* 265:1237 (1987)), and (NZB \times NZW)F₁ (Kotzin, B.L., *et al.*, *J. Exp. Med.* 265:1237 (1987)) mice.

[0083] Studies conducted in support of the present invention and detailed below demonstrate that orally-administered IFN τ compositions are comparable in efficacy to injected IFN τ compositions with respect to the treatment of diseases or

disease conditions which benefit from treatment with IFN τ . Not only was orally-administered IFN τ effective at treating a disease benefiting from IFN τ treatment (EAE), but the oral route of administration resulted in unexpected advantages relative to treatment with injected IFN τ compositions. For example, orally-administered IFN τ resulted in a significantly lower level of anti-IFN τ antibodies in the serum of treated individuals. This is beneficial because the orally-administered IFN τ is therefore less likely to be rendered ineffective by a host immune response (*i.e.*, desensitization to the treatment and/or dose level is significantly decreased), and the individual receiving the treatment is less likely to suffer adverse side effects as a result of such an immune response.

[0084] Results of experiments demonstrating these and related findings are presented below.

a. Orally-Administered IFN τ Inhibits Development of EAE

[0085] As described in Example 5, orally-administered and injected IFN τ was tested for its ability to prevent the induction of EAE. EAE was induced in New Zealand White (NZW) mice by immunization with bovine myelin basic protein (bMBP). Recipient NZW mice received OvIFN τ by either i.p. injection or oral feeding 48 hours prior to, on the day of, and 48 hours after immunization with bovine myelin basic protein (bMBP) for induction of experimental allergic encephalomyelitis (EAE).

[0086] Both oral feeding and i.p. injection of OvIFN τ protected against EAE (Example 5, Table 6). All animals that received IFN τ via i.p. injection, and seven of nine animals that received IFN τ orally, were protected from symptoms of EAE. Furthermore, anti-OvIFN τ monoclonal antibody HL127 was effective at partially neutralizing the ability of the OvIFN τ to block EAE. These experiments demonstrate that orally-administered IFN τ is effective in treating symptoms of EAE, an animal model of multiple sclerosis.

b. OvIFN τ is Present in Sera Following Oral Administration.

[0087] To confirm that orally-administered IFN τ enters the circulation, the sera of mice that received IFN τ by i.p. injection or by oral administration were tested for

the presence of IFN τ using a cytopathic effect (antiviral) assay (Familetti, P.C. *et al.*, *Meth. Enzymol.* 78:387 (1981)) as described in Example 6.

[0088] The results are shown in Fig. 9. Specific activities are expressed in antiviral units/mg protein obtained from antiviral assays using MDBK cells. OvIFN τ was detected for up to two hours following oral feeding (filled bars) at levels of 200 U/mL. These data indicate that orally-administered IFN τ enters the circulation and remains in serum for about two hours after being administered.

c. Lack of Toxicity from Orally-administered OvIFN τ

[0089] It has been previously demonstrated that the type I IFNs IFN α and IFN β induced toxic side effects manifested as flu like symptoms, fever, nausea and malaise when used as therapeutics in humans (Degre, M., *Int. J. Cancer* 14:699 (1974); Fent, K. and G. Zbinden, *Trnds. Pharm. Sci.* 56:1-26 (1987)). In contrast, OvIFN τ exhibits a remarkable lack of toxicity both *in vitro* and *in vivo*. Studies performed in support of the present invention compared OvIFN τ with IFNs α and β for induction of toxicity as measured by lymphocyte depression in peripheral blood when given via oral feeding. Blood was obtained from the tail and white blood cells (WBC) counts were enumerated using a hemocytometer. Differential WBC counts were performed on Wright-Giemsa-stained blood smears.

[0090] The results are shown in Tables 1A, 1B, and 1C. Significant levels of toxicity were detected in mice fed either IFN α and β while no significant lymphocyte depression was detected in mice fed 10^5 , 2×10^5 or 5×10^5 U of OvIFN τ or PBS alone. These data suggest that orally-administered OvIFN τ has significantly-reduced toxicity with respect to other type I IFNs.

Table 1A
Comparison of IFNs τ , β and α for Toxicity After Oral Feeding

IFN (DOSE)	CELL COUNT (CELL NO. $\times 10^3$)	
	BEFORE ORAL FEEDING	
	TOTAL WBC	LYMPHOCYTES
PBS	7.0 \pm 1.4	6.1 \pm 1.2
$\tau(10^5)$	7.5 \pm 0.7	6.4 \pm 0.6
$\tau(2 \times 10^5)$	6.5 \pm 0.7	5.3 \pm 0.6
$\tau(5 \times 10^5)$	7.5 \pm 0.7	6.5 \pm 0.6
$\beta(10^5)$	7.0 \pm 0.7	5.9 \pm 1.2
$\beta(2 \times 10^5)$	7.5 \pm 2.1	6.5 \pm 1.8
$\alpha(10^5)$	7.5 \pm 0.7	6.6 \pm 0.6

Table 1B
Comparison of IFNs τ , β and α for Toxicity After Oral Feeding

IFN (DOSE)	CELL COUNT (CELL NO. $\times 10^3$)		
	18 H AFTER ORAL FEEDING		
	TOTAL WBC	LYMPHOCYTES	% LYMPHOCYTE DEPRESSION
PBS	--	--	--
$\tau(10^5)$	7.0 \pm 1.4	6.0 \pm 1.3	6.2
$\tau(2 \times 10^5)$	7.0 \pm 2.8	5.9 \pm 2.4	0
$\tau(5 \times 10^5)$	7.5 \pm 2.1	6.3 \pm 1.8	3.1
$\beta(10^5)$	6.5 \pm 0.7	5.1 \pm 0.6	13.6
$\beta(2 \times 10^5)$	6.5 \pm 0.7	4.1 \pm 0.4 [†]	37.0
$\alpha(10^5)$	6.5 \pm 2.1	4.7 \pm 1.6	28.8

[†]p<0.05

Table 1C
Comparison of IFNs τ , β and α for Toxicity After Oral Feeding

IFN (DOSE)	CELL COUNT (CELL NO. $\times 10^3$)		
	24 H AFTER ORAL FEEDING		
	TOTAL WBC	LYMPHOCYTES	% LYMPHOCYTE DEPRESSION
PBS	7.5 ± 0.7	6.4 ± 0.6	0
$\tau(10^5)$	8.0 ± 2.8	6.9 ± 2.4	0
$\tau(2 \times 10^5)$	7.0 ± 1.4	6.0 ± 1.1	0
$\tau(5 \times 10^5)$	8.0 ± 4.2	7.0 ± 3.6	0
$\beta(10^5)$	6.5 ± 3.5	5.1 ± 2.8	13.6
$\beta(2 \times 10^5)$	6.5 ± 0.7	$4.0 \pm 0.4^\dagger$	38.5
$\alpha(10^5)$	7.0 ± 0	$5.0 \pm 0^\ddagger$	24.2

$^\dagger p < 0.05$

$^\ddagger p < 0.03$

d. OvIFN τ Prevents Chronic Relapse of EAE

[0091] In addition to preventing the onset of symptoms associated with EAE, orally-administered OvIFN τ prevents paralysis in a chronic-relapsing model of EAE, as detailed in Example 7. Whereas 5/5 mice immunized with MBP (to induce EAE) which did not receive OvIFN τ treatment developed chronic relapsing paralysis, 4/5 animals treated with OvIFN τ (either i.p. injection or oral feeding, administered every 48 hours) were fully protected from the disease (Figs. 10B and 10C). These data further support the results described above, and indicate that oral administration of IFN τ can block the development of chronic relapsing EAE. The studies also suggest that orally-administration of IFN τ as infrequently as once every 48 hours, over an extended period of time, is as effective as i.p. injection at treating a disease condition responsive to treatment by IFN τ .

e. Histological Analyses of Spinal Chord from EAE Mice following Oral Administration of IFN τ .

[0092] The ability of OvIFN τ to prevent EAE was also assayed by analyzing the effect of OvIFN τ treatment on cellular consequences of the disease, manifested in the central nervous system (CNS) as lymphocytic lesions in spinal cord white

matter. The lesions are indicative of the extent of lymphocyte infiltration into the CNS. MBP-immunized mice were either not treated (control) or treated with OvIFN τ by oral or i.p. routes, and sections of the spinal cord lumbar region were stained and evaluated for lymphocytes as described in Example 8.

Photomicrographs of the tissue sections are shown in Figs. 11A-11C.

Lymphocytic lesions were present in spinal cord white matter of control animals (Fig. 11A), but not in mice treated with OvIFN τ by i.p. injection (Fig. 11B) or oral feeding (Fig. 11C). These data indicate that the protective effect of IFN τ is associated with inhibition of lymphocyte infiltration of the CNS. Further, the data demonstrate that IFN τ treatment inhibits cellular manifestation of the autoimmune disease, rather than simply masking symptoms.

f. Cessation of Treatment with OvIFN τ Results in Relapsing Paralysis.

[0093] Example 10 describes a study performed to determine the type and duration of treatment effective to prevent EAE in mice injected with MBP, and the results are shown in Fig. 13. The mice were protected from EAE by OvIFN τ treatment via i.p. injection or oral feeding (every 48 hours) as long as the treatment persisted (58 days in Example 10), but developed symptoms of the disease after OvIFN τ treatment was stopped (Fig. 13). These results suggest that while IFN τ may not cure an autoimmune condition like EAE (e.g., MS), it is an effective treatment that inhibits the pathological manifestations of the condition so long as treatment is continued.

g. Oral Administration of OvIFN τ Reduces Anti-OvIFN τ Antibody Response.

[0094] As detailed in Example 11, one advantage of orally-administered (as opposed to injected) IFN τ treatment is a reduction in the anti-IFN τ antibody titer in individuals receiving the oral treatment. After removal of OvIFN τ treatment, mice from each treatment group were bled and sera were examined for the presence of anti-OvIFN τ antibodies by ELISA. Whereas mice receiving IFN τ by i.p. injection exhibited elevated levels of anti-IFN τ antibodies, animals receiving IFN τ by oral feeding exhibited much lower anti-IFN τ antibody titers (typically 3 to 5 -fold lower). As expected, mice which received no OvIFN τ treatment displayed no anti-OvIFN τ

antibodies.

[0095] The sera were also examined for their ability to neutralize OvIFN τ antiviral activity on the MDBK cell line. None of the sera from either i.p. injected or orally fed mice possessed neutralizing activity (Table 7). These results suggest that oral feeding of OvIFN τ largely circumvents an antibody response directed against the OvIFN τ protein. Such a reduced antibody response in orally-treated subjects reduces the chance of undesirable immune system-related side effects of IFN τ treatment.

III. Methods of Use

[0096] In a first aspect, the invention provides a method for treating in a human subject a disease or condition responsive to interferon therapy. A condition "responsive to interferon therapy" is one in which the existence, progression, or symptoms of the condition is altered upon administration of an interferon, in particular a type-I interferon, and more particularly, interferon-tau. Conditions responsive to treatment with IFN α or IFN β may also respond to treatment with IFN τ . More preferably, a condition responsive to interferon therapy is one where the existence, progression, or symptoms of the condition are alleviated by IFN τ administered in a non-oral route, such as injection. The method described herein encompasses providing IFN τ in an orally-administrable dosage form, for administration to the stomach and/or intestines, in an amount effective for therapy, as evidenced by an increase in the subject's blood OAS levels.

[0097] IFN τ has biological activity as an antiviral agent, an anti-proliferative agent, and in treatment of autoimmune disorders (see for example U.S. Patent Nos. 5,958,402; 5,942,223; 6,060,450; 6,372,206, which are incorporated by reference herein). Accordingly, the invention contemplates oral administration of IFN τ for treatment of any condition responsive to IFN- τ when administered via injection. Conditions and diseases which may be treated using methods of the present invention include autoimmune, inflammatory, proliferative and hyperproliferative diseases, as well as immunologically-mediated diseases.

A. Treatment of Immune System Disorders

[0098] The method of the present invention is advantageous for treating conditions relating to immune system hypersensitivity. There are four types of immune system hypersensitivity (Clayman, C.B., Ed., AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MEDICINE, Random House, New York, N.Y., (1991)).

Type I, or immediate/anaphylactic hypersensitivity, is due to mast cell degranulation in response to an allergen (e.g., pollen), and includes asthma, allergic rhinitis (hay fever), urticaria (hives), anaphylactic shock, and other illnesses of an allergic nature. Type II, or autoimmune hypersensitivity, is due to antibodies that are directed against perceived "antigens" on the body's own cells. Type III hypersensitivity is due to the formation of antigen/antibody immune complexes which lodge in various tissues and activate further immune responses, and is responsible for conditions such as serum sickness, allergic alveolitis, and the large swellings that sometimes form after booster vaccinations. Type IV hypersensitivity is due to the release of lymphokines from sensitized T-cells, which results in an inflammatory reaction. Examples include contact dermatitis, the rash of measles, and "allergic" reactions to certain drugs.

[0099] The mechanisms by which certain conditions may result in hypersensitivity in some individuals are generally not well understood, but may involve both genetic and extrinsic factors. For example, bacteria, viruses or drugs may play a role in triggering an autoimmune response in an individual who already has a genetic predisposition to the autoimmune disorder. It has been suggested that the incidence of some types of hypersensitivity may be correlated with others. For example, it has been proposed that individuals with certain common allergies are more susceptible to autoimmune disorders.

[0100] Autoimmune disorders may be loosely grouped into those primarily restricted to specific organs or tissues and those that affect the entire body. Examples of organ-specific disorders (with the organ affected) include multiple sclerosis (myelin coating on nerve processes), type I diabetes mellitus (pancreas), Hashimoto's thyroiditis (thyroid gland), pernicious anemia (stomach), Addison's disease (adrenal glands), myasthenia gravis (acetylcholine receptors at neuromuscular junction), rheumatoid arthritis (joint lining), uveitis (eye), psoriasis (skin), Guillain-Barré Syndrome (nerve cells) and Grave's disease (thyroid). Systemic autoimmune diseases include systemic lupus erythematosus and

dermatomyositis.

[0101] Other examples of hypersensitivity disorders include asthma, eczema, atopic dermatitis, contact dermatitis, other eczematous dermatitides, seborrheic dermatitis, rhinitis, Lichen planus, Pemphigus, bullous Pemphigoid, Epidermolysis bullosa, urticaria, angioedemas, vasculitides, erythemas, cutaneous eosinophilias, Alopecia areata, atherosclerosis, primary biliary cirrhosis and nephrotic syndrome. Related diseases include intestinal inflammations, such as Coeliac disease, proctitis, eosinophilia gastroenteritis, mastocytosis, inflammatory bowel disease, Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, as well as food-related allergies.

[0102] Autoimmune diseases particularly amenable for treatment using the methods of the present invention include multiple sclerosis, type I (insulin dependent) diabetes mellitus, lupus erythematosus, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, Crohn's disease, rheumatoid arthritis, stomatitis, asthma, uveitis, allergies and psoriasis.

[0103] The method of the present invention is used to therapeutically treat and thereby alleviate autoimmune disorders, such as those discussed above. Treatment of an autoimmune disorder is exemplified herein with respect to the treatment of EAE, an animal model for multiple sclerosis. When used to treat an autoimmune disorder, IFN τ is preferably administered at a dose sufficient to achieve the measurable increase in OAS in the subject over an extended period of time when the patient is symptomatic. Upon cessation of symptoms associated with the autoimmune condition, the dosage may be adjusted downward or treatment may cease.

B. Treatment of Viral Infections

[0104] The method of the invention is also used to treat conditions associated with viral infection. The antiviral activity of IFN τ has broad therapeutic applications without the toxic effects that are usually associated with IFN α s, and IFN τ exerts its therapeutic activity without adverse effects on the cells. The relative lack of cytotoxicity of IFN τ makes it extremely valuable as an *in vivo* therapeutic agent and sets IFN τ apart from most other known antiviral agents and all other known interferons.

[0105] Formulations containing IFN τ can be orally-administered to inhibit viral replication. For use in treating a viral infection, the protein is preferably administered at a dose and for a time sufficient to achieve a measurable increase in blood OAS in the patient. Administration of IFN τ is continued until the level of viral infection, as measured for example from a blood viral titer or from clinical observations of symptoms associated with the viral infection, is reduced. Examples of specific viral diseases which may be treated by orally-administered IFN τ include, but are not limited to, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, hepatitis C, non-A, non-B, non-C hepatitis, Epstein-Barr viral infection, HIV infection, herpes virus (EB, CML, herpes simplex), papilloma, poxvirus, picorna virus, adeno virus, rhino virus, HTLV I, HTLV II, and human rotavirus.

C. Method for Treating Conditions of Cellular Proliferation

[0106] In another embodiment, the methods of the invention are contemplated for treatment of conditions characterized by hyperproliferation. IFN τ exhibits potent anticellular proliferation activity. Accordingly, a method of inhibiting cellular growth by orally administering IFN τ is contemplated, in order to inhibit, prevent, or slow uncontrolled cell growth.

[0107] Examples of specific cell proliferation disorders which may be treated by orally-administered IFN τ include, but are not limited to, hairy cell leukemia, Kaposi's Sarcoma, chronic myelogenous leukemia, multiple myeloma, superficial bladder cancer, skin cancer (basal cell carcinoma and malignant melanoma), renal cell carcinoma, ovarian cancer, low grade lymphocytic and cutaneous T cell lymphoma, and glioma.

D. Formulations and Dosages

[0108] Oral preparations containing IFN τ can be formulated according to known methods for preparing pharmaceutical compositions. In general, the IFN τ therapeutic compositions are formulated such that an effective amount of the IFN τ is combined with a suitable additive, carrier and/or excipient in order to facilitate effective oral administration of the composition. For example, tablets and capsules containing IFN τ may be prepared by combining IFN τ (e.g., lyophilized IFN τ protein) with additives such as pharmaceutically acceptable carriers (e.g., lactose,

corn starch, microcrystalline cellulose, sucrose), binders (e.g., alpha-form starch, methylcellulose, carboxymethylcellulose, hydroxypropylcellulose, hydroxypropylmethylcellulose, polyvinylpyrrolidone), disintegrating agents (e.g., carboxymethylcellulose calcium, starch, low substituted hydroxy-propylcellulose), surfactants (e.g., Tween 80, polyoxyethylene-polyoxypropylene copolymer), antioxidants (e.g., L-cysteine, sodium sulfite, sodium ascorbate), lubricants (e.g., magnesium stearate, talc), or the like.

[0109] Further, IFN τ polypeptides of the present invention can be mixed with a solid, pulverulent or other carrier, for example lactose, saccharose, sorbitol, mannitol, starch, such as potato starch, corn starch, millopectine, cellulose derivative or gelatine, and may also include lubricants, such as magnesium or calcium stearate, or polyethylene glycol waxes compressed to the formation of tablets. By using several layers of the carrier or diluent, tablets operating with slow release can be prepared.

[0110] Liquid preparations for oral administration can be made in the form of elixirs, syrups or suspensions, for example solutions containing from about 0.1% to about 30% by weight of IFN τ , sugar and a mixture of ethanol, water, glycerol, propylene, glycol and possibly other additives of a conventional nature.

[0111] Another suitable formulation is a protective dosage form that protects the protein for survival in the stomach and intestines until absorbed by the intestinal mucosa. Protective dosage forms for proteins are known in the art, and include enteric coatings and/or mucoadhesive polymer coatings. Exemplary mucoadhesive polymer formulations include ethyl cellulose, hydroxypropylmethylcellulose, Eudragit[®], carboxyvinly polymer, carbomer, and the like. A dosage form designed for administration to the stomach via ingestion for delivery of IFN τ in an active form to the intestinal tract, and particularly to the small intestine, is contemplated. Alternatively, IFN τ can be co-administered with protease inhibitors, stabilized with polymeric materials, or encapsulated in a lipid or polymer particle to offer some protection from the stomach and/or intestinal environment.

[0112] An orally-active IFN τ pharmaceutical composition is administered in a therapeutically-effective amount to an individual in need of treatment. The dose may vary considerably and is dependent on factors such as the seriousness of the

disorder, the age and the weight of the patient, other medications that the patient may be taking and the like. This amount or dosage is typically determined by the attending physician. The dosage will typically be between about 1×10^4 and 1×10^9 units/day, more preferably between 1×10^5 and 1×10^8 units/day, preferably between about 1×10^6 and 1×10^7 units/day. In one specific embodiment, IFN- τ is administered orally at a dosage of greater than about 1×10^4 units/day, preferably of greater than about 1×10^5 units/day, more preferably of greater than about 1×10^6 units/day, and still more preferably greater than about 1×10^8 units/day.

[0113] Disorders requiring a steady elevated level of IFN τ in plasma will benefit from administration as often as about every two to four hours, while other disorders, such as multiple sclerosis, may be effectively treated by administering a therapeutically-effective dose at less frequent intervals, e.g., once a day or once every 48 hours. The rate of administration of individual doses is typically adjusted by an attending physician to enable administration of the lowest total dosage while alleviating the severity of the disease being treated. As discussed above, the method contemplates administering IFN τ orally at a first dose to a patient in need of treatment, and monitoring a biological marker to determine the individual patient response to the first dosage level. Monitoring can be readily done via a blood draw and analysis of a marker, such as OAS, in the blood, using, for example a radioimmunoassay kit. Accordingly, in another aspect, the invention contemplates a kit for using in treating a person suffering from a condition responsive to IFN τ . The kit includes a first part, comprised of a container containing one or more dosage form units designed for oral administration of IFN τ and a second part comprised of components required to monitor a biomarker of IFN τ , such as the components needed to analyze blood OAS levels.

[0114] Once improvement of a patient's condition has occurred, a maintenance dose is administered if necessary. Subsequently, the dosage or the frequency of administration, or both, may be reduced, as a function of the symptoms, to a level at which the improved condition is retained.

[0115] It will, of course, be understood that the oral administration of IFN τ in accord with the invention may be used in combination with other therapies. For example, IFN τ can be accompanied by administration of an antigen against which an autoimmune response is directed. Examples include co-administration of

myelin basic protein and IFN τ to treat multiple sclerosis; collagen and IFN τ to treat rheumatoid arthritis, and acetylcholine receptor polypeptides and IFN τ to treat myasthenia gravis.

[0116] Furthermore, IFN τ may be orally administered with known immunosuppressants, such as steroids, to treat autoimmune diseases such as multiple sclerosis. The immunosuppressants may act synergistically with IFN τ and result in a more effective treatment that could be obtained with an equivalent dose of IFN τ or the immunosuppressant alone.

[0117] Similarly, in a treatment for a cancer or viral disease, IFN τ may be administered in conjunction with, e.g., a therapeutically effective amount of one or more chemotherapy agents such as busulfan, 5-fluorouracil (5-FU), zidovudine (AZT), leucovorin, melphalan, prednisone, cyclophosphamide, dacarbazine, cisplatin, dipyridamole, and the like.

IV. Examples

[0118] The following examples further illustrate the invention described herein and are in no way intended to limit the scope of the invention.

Materials and Methods

A. Production of IFN τ

[0119] In one embodiment, a synthetic IFN τ gene was generated using standard molecular methods (Ausubel, et al., 1988) by ligating oligonucleotides containing contiguous portions of a DNA sequence encoding the IFN τ amino acid sequence. The DNA sequence used may be either SEQ ID NO:1 or 4 or the sequence as shown in Imakawa, et al., 1987. The resulting IFN τ polynucleotide coding sequence may span position 16 through 531: a coding sequence of 172 amino acids.

[0120] In one embodiment, the full length synthetic gene StuI/SstI fragment (540 bp) may be cloned into a modified pIN III omp-A expression vector and transformed into a competent SB221 strain of E. coli. For expression of the IFN τ protein, cells carrying the expression vector were grown in L-broth containing ampicillin to an OD (550 nm) of 0.1 – 1, induced with IPTG (isopropyl-1-thio- β -D-galactoside) for 3 hours and harvested by centrifugation. Soluble recombinant

IFN- τ may be liberated from the cells by sonication or osmotic fractionation.

[0121] For expression in yeast, the IFN- τ gene may be amplified using polymerase chain reaction (PCR; Mullis, K.B., U.S. Patent No. 4,683,202, issued 28 July 1987; Mullis, K.B., et al., U. S. Patent No. 4,683,195, issued 28 July 1987) with PCR primers containing StuI and SacI restriction sites at the 5' and 3' ends, respectively. The amplified fragments were digested with StuI and SacII and ligated into the SacII and SmaI sites of pBLUESCRIPT+(KS), generating pBSY-IFN τ . Plasmid pBSY-IFN τ was digested with SacII and EcoRV and the fragment containing the synthetic IFN- τ gene was isolated. The yeast expression vector pBS24Ub (Ecker, D.J., et al., J. Biol. Chem. 264:7715-7719 (1989)) was digested with Sall. Blunt ends were generated using T4 DNA polymerase. The vector DNA was extracted with phenol and ethanol precipitated (Sambrook, J., et al., in MOLECULAR CLONING: A LABORATORY MANUAL, Second Edition, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, Cold Spring Harbor, NY (1989)). The recovered plasmid was digested with SacII, purified by agarose gel electrophoresis, and ligated to the SacII-EcoRV fragment isolated from pBSY-IFN- τ . The resulting recombinant plasmid was designated pBS24Ub-IFN τ .

[0122] The recombinant plasmid pBS24Ub-IFN τ was transformed into *E. coli*. Recombinant clones containing the IFN- τ insert were isolated and identified by restriction enzyme analysis. IFN- τ coding sequences were isolated from pBS24Ub-IFN τ and cloned into a *Pichia pastoris* vector containing the alcohol oxidase (AOX1) promoter (Invitrogen, San Diego, CA). The vector was then used to transform *Pichia pastoris* GS115 His⁻ host cells and protein was expressed following the manufacturer's instructions. The protein was secreted into the medium and purified by successive DEAE-cellulose and hydroxyapatite chromatography to electrophoretic homogeneity as determined by SDS-PAGE and silver staining.

[0123] In one embodiment, the purified IFN- τ protein has a specific activity of about 0.29 to about 0.44×10^8 U/mg as measured by anti-viral activity on Madin-Darby bovine kidney (MDBK) cells. In another embodiment, the protein has a specific activity of about 4.9×10^8 U/mg as measured by the anti-viral activity bioassay.

EXAMPLE 1

Induction of OAS with Orally and Intraperitoneally Administered ovine IFN- τ to Mice

[0124] IFN τ (4.99×10^8 units/mg protein; Pepgen Corp., California or Biological Process Development Facility, Dept. of Food Science and Technology, University of NE-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE; SEQ ID NO:4) was dissolved in 10% maltose solution to prepare IFN τ solution. The use of IFN τ (SEQ ID NO:2) is also contemplated in the present invention. Two hundred microliters of IFN τ solution was orally administered to ICR mice (average body weight approximately 30g, 6 weeks of age, female) using a 20 gauge disposable oral sound (Fuchigami, Kyoto) to inject directly to an upper part of the stomach (gastric administration; GA).

[0125] For intraperitoneal administration (i.p.), 100 microliters of IFN τ solution was used. Sample injection to an upper part of a stomach was confirmed by administration of a dye. Twenty-four hours after the administration, the mouse was anesthetized with nembutal. Blood was taken from a heart of the mouse and an OAS activity in whole blood was determined by 2-5A RIA Kit (Eiken Chemical, Tokyo; Shindo, M. et al., Hepatology, 9:715-719 (1989)).

[0126] The results are shown in Fig. 1.

EXAMPLE 2

Dose-dependent Induction of OAS by Oral Administration of IFN- τ in Mice

[0127] Using the same procedure as Example 1, IFN τ was orally administered in units of 0, 10^3 , 10^4 , or 10^5 to an ICR mouse. Twelve hours after oral administration, whole blood was taken from a mouse heart and an OAS activity of whole blood was determined. The results are shown in Fig. 2.

EXAMPLE 3

Administration of IFN- τ to Mice

[0128] Pathogen-free 5-week-old female mice of the ICR, BALB/c, C57BL/9, NZW/N and SJL/J strains were purchased from Japan SLC, Inc., Hamamatsu. The mice were reared one week in the laboratory before experiments.

[0129] Recombinant ovine IFN- τ (IFN- τ) having a sequence identified herein as SEQ ID NO:3 was obtained (Pepgen Corporation, Alameda, CA). The preparation

used in this study had a specific activity of 5×10^8 units (U)/mg protein as assayed in MDBK cells challenged with VSV and standardized against human IFN- α . Natural murine IFN- α (MuIFN- α) was supplied by Sumitomo Pharmaceutical Co. (Osaka, Japan), whose specific activity was 1×10^8 international units (IU)/mg protein.

[0130] For administration to the mice, IFN- τ was dissolved in a solution containing 10% maltose. Samples of 0.2 ml were administered to mice (6-week-old females) by either peroral (p.o.) treatment or intraperitoneal (i.p.) injection. When given orally, the samples were introduced directly into the upper part of the stomach using a 20 gauge oral feeding needle. Before the administration, mice were deprived of both food and drink for 6 hours, starting at 1 pm and ending at 7 pm. After the fasting, IFN τ was administered by either the p.o. or i.p. route and food and drink were given at 6 hours. Then, whole blood was obtained from the heart at 24 hours.

[0131] The 2',5'-oligoadenylate synthetase (OAS) activity in whole blood was assayed with Eiken's 2-5A RIA kit. Diluted blood was mixed with polyI:C-agarose gel, ATP was added after washing the gel, and the 2-5A produced was assayed by the RIA method (Shindo, M. et al., Hepatology, 9:715-719 (1989)). The assays were performed twice in each sample. For the estimation of the level of blood OAS, at least three mice were used.

EXAMPLE 4

Reduced ALT, Reduced HCV Viral Titer, and Induction of OAS by Oral Administration of IFN- τ in Human Patients

A. IFN- τ Preparation

[0132] On day one, one bottle of IFN τ (SEQ ID NO:4) was removed from the refrigerator and the patient self-administered the proper volume of test material according to Table 2. IFN τ (SEQ ID NO:2) may also be prepared and administered in the same manner.

Table 2
Recombinant Ov-IFN- τ Patient Dose Administration

Dose Group	Number of Patients	Ov-IFN- τ (mg/mL)	Volume (mL) per Dose (TID)	Total Daily Dose (mg)
I	6	1.0	0.33	1.0
II	6	1.0	1.0	3.0
III	6	1.0	3.0	9.0
IV	6	1.0	5.0	15.0

B. Patient Dosing Instructions

[0133] All vials of test material and syringes were kept in a refrigerator maintained at 2 to 8 degrees centigrade. Prior to the self-administration of medication, the patient removed one vial and one syringe from the refrigerator. The cap was removed from the tip of the syringe and the tip of the syringe was placed into the bottle of medication to withdraw the appropriate volume into the syringe as instructed at the clinic on Day 1.

[0134] The tip of the syringe was placed in the mouth and the syringe contents were emptied into the mouth by depressing the plunger. The patient then swallowed the test material. If desired, the patient was allowed to drink a glass of water. The patient noted on his/her diary card the date and time the dose of test material was administered.

[0135] The above steps were repeated three times per day at approximately eight-hour intervals: once in the morning, once at midday, and once in the evening.

C. Results

[0136] Blood samples were taken at defined intervals over a 169 day test period. The samples were analyzed for 2',5'-oligoadenylate synthetase (OAS) levels in the serum and in the peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMC) using a 2-5A RIA kit (Eiken Chemical, Tokyo). Diluted blood was mixed with polyI:C-agarose gel, ATP was added after washing the gel, and the 2-5A produced was

assayed by the RIA method (Shindo, M. et al., Hepatology, 9:715-719 (1989)). The assays, performed twice in each sample. The viral titer of hepatitis C, using reverse-transcriptase polymerase chain reaction, and the serum concentration of alanine aminotransferase (ALT) were also determined.

[0137] The results for each subject are shown in Tables 3-5 below, and graphically in Figures 7-8. An increase in OAS levels, and a decrease in both ALT and viral titer levels following oral ovine IFN- τ administration was observed.

Table 3A
Viral Titer, ALT and 2-5A Levels in Three Patients in Dos Group 1
(0.33 mg IFN τ three times daily)

Patient Initials/#	Timepoint	HCV RT-PCR	ALT (IU/L)	Serum OAS pmol/dL
PAB/001	Screen	790,000	64	12.46
PAB/001	Day 1	290,000	63	10.00
PAB/001	Day 2	---	---	10.00
PAB/001	Day 3	1,700,000	57	5.00
PAB/001	Day 8	530,000	56	5.00
PAB/001	Day 15	580,000	61	---
PAB/001	Day 22	13,000	66	2.50
PAB/001	Day 29	230,000	40	10.00
PAB/001	Day 43	---	42	7.50
PAB/001	Day 57	640,000	37	16.67
PAB/001	Day 71	---	---	12.46
PAB/001	Day 85	960,000	50	13.86
PAB/001	Day 113	160,000	53	0.00
MSM/002	Screen	4,600,000	258	11.05
MSM/002	Day 1	5,100,000	164	16.67
MSM/002	Day 2/24hr.	---	---	10.00
MSM/002	Day 3	6,300,000	154	29.30
MSM/002	Day 8	5,100,000	133	33.08
MSM/002	Day 15	9,100,000	100	54.62
MSM/002	Day 22	---	103	51.54
MSM/002	Day 29	8,600,000	91	28.60
MSM/002	Day 43	---	86	12.46
MSM/002	Day 57	3,400,000	82	18.77
MSM/002	Day 71	---	---	36.15
MSM/002	Day 85	3,700,000	49	26.14
MSM/002	Day 113	3,800,000	64	42.31
DMA/003	Screen	780,000	115	28.60
DMA/003	Day 1	990,000	115	26.14
DMA/003	Day 3	660,000	121	30.00
DMA/003	Day 8	920,000	105	36.15
DMA/003	Day 15	580,000	107	26.14
DMA/003	Day 22	---	105	24.74
DMA/003	Day 29	170,000	97	27.54
DMA/003	Day 43	---	85	23.33
DMA/003	Day 57	650,000	74	59.23
DMA/003	Day 71	---	---	36.15
DMA/003	Day 85	11,000	49	16.00
DMA/003	Day 107	880,000	45	---
DMA/003	Day 115	50,000	55	20.24
DMA/003	---	460,000	47	---

Tabl 3B
Viral Titer, ALT and 2-5A Levels in Three Patients in Dose Group 1
(0.33 mg IFN τ three times daily)

Patient Initials/#	Timepoint	HCV RT-PCR	ALT (IU/L)	Serum OAS pmol/dL
LER/004	Screen	6,100,000	118	33.95
LER/004	Day 1	6,000,000	108	33.95
LER/004	Day 3	11,000,000	120	53.68
LER/004	Day 8	1,900,000	109	29.51
LER/004	Day 15	3,400,000	120	41.84
LER/004	Day 22	---	94	34.74
LER/004	Day 29	640,000	109	43.42
LER/004	Day 43	---	99	49.74
LER/004	Day 57	4,400,000	106	37.89
LER/004	Day 71	---	---	81.00
LER/004	Day 85	3,900,000	67	3.20
LER/004	Day 113	3,200,000	107	---
Z-I/005	Screen	3,400,000	151	43.42
Z-I/005	Day 1	4,600,000	134	43.42
Z-I/005	Day 2	---	144	45.00
Z-I/005	Day 3	1,400,000	109	46.58
Z-I/005	Day 8	4,000,000	94	12.93
Z-I/005	Day 15	1,100,000	107	48.95
Z-I/005	Day 22	---	107	47.37
Z-I/005	Day 29	2,200,000	144	74.82
Z-I/005	Day 43	---	111	26.10
Z-I/005	Day 57	4,400,000	122	43.42
Z-I/005	Day 71	---	---	10.00
Z-I/005	Day 85	1,100,000	122	17.80
Z-I/005	Day 113	3,200,000	132	---
JRJ/006	Screen	21,000,000	111	52.11
JRJ/006	Day 1	8,500,000	104	21.90
JRJ/006	Day 3	6,000,000	98	26.53
JRJ/006	Day 8	950,000	124	24.21
JRJ/006	Day 15	3,700,000	118	19.09
JRJ/006	Day 22	---	109	22.07
JRJ/006	Day 29	3,300,000	93	19.75
JRJ/006	Day 43	---	122	24.88
JRJ/006	Day 57	7,000,000	78	35.62
JRJ/006	Day 71	---	---	52.92
JRJ/006	Day 85	5,000,000	88	42.92
JRJ/006	Day 113	>5,000,000	---	---

Table 4
Viral Titer, ALT and 2-5A Levels in Three Patients in Dose Group 2
(1 mg IFN α three times daily)

Patient Initials/#	Timep int	HCV RT-PCR	ALT (IU/L)	Serum OAS pmol/dL
AMC/007	Screen	1,700,000	44	11.20
AMC/007	Day 1	1,300,000	48	18.40
AMC/007	Day 3	810,000	44	27.60
AMC/007	Day 8	630,000	50	42.40
AMC/007	Day 15	290,000	54	50.67
AMC/007	Day 22	---	53	94.50
AMC/007	Day 29	410,000	36	120.00
AMC/007	Day 43	---	29	81.33
AMC/007	Day 57	930,000	36	55.33
AMC/007	Day 71	---	---	51.33
AMC/007	Day 85	---	---	---
AMC/007	Day 113	---	---	---
AMC/007	Day 169	---	---	---
ALW/008	Screen	30,000,000	47	53.33
ALW/008	Day 1	3,000,000	38	10.00
ALW/008	Day 3	3,200,000	42	42.00
ALW/008	Day 8	5,400,000	31	14.40
ALW/008	Day 15	17,000,000	29	10.00
ALW/008	Day 22	---	27	10.40
ALW/008	Day 29	11,000,000	25	10.00
ALW/008	Day 43	---	40	14.40
ALW/008	Day 57	18,000,000	31	12.80
ALW/008	Day 71	---	---	16.40
ALW/008	Day 85	---	---	---
ALW/008	Day 113	---	---	---
ALW/008	Day 169	---	---	---
DBF/012	Screen	5,300,000	84	28.80
DBF/012	Day 1	9,300,000	77	26.00
DBF/012	Day 3	9,400,000	71	10.00
DBF/012	Day 8	7,900,000	86	53.33
DBF/012	Day 15	9,100,000	67	108.00
DBF/012	Day 22	---	64	42.67
DBF/012	Day 29	9,900,000	58	52.00
DBF/012	Day 43	---	61	58.00
DBF/012	Day 57	15,000,000	70	61.33
DBF/012	Day 71	---	---	168.00
DBF/012	Day 85	---	---	---
DBF/012	Day 113	---	---	---
DBF/012	Day 169	---	---	---

Table 5
Viral Titer, ALT and 2-5A Levels in Three Patients in Dos Group 3
(3 mg IFN τ three times daily)

Patient Initials/#	Timepoint	HCV RT-PCR	ALT (IU/L)	Serum OAS pmol/dL	PBMC OAS pmol/5x10 ⁶ PBMC/mL
VCC/009	Screen	5,100,000	113	17.20	---
VCC/009	Day 1	4,300,000	128	58.67	286.88
VCC/009	Day 2	---	---	10.00	---
VCC/009	Day 3	3,500,000	126	18.40	218.57
VCC/009	Day 8	1,600,000	130	24.80	---
VCC/009	Day 15	2,200,000	118	25.20	624.38
VCC/009	Day 22	---	99	18.00	---
VCC/009	Day 29	1,500,000	93	30.67	1261.43
VCC/009	Day 43	---	72	15.20	---
VCC/009	Day 57	2,700,000	62	10.00	---
VCC/009	Day 71	---	---	18.40	---
VCC/009	Day 85	---	---	---	---
VCC/009	Day 113	---	---	---	---
VCC/009	Day 169	---	---	---	---
HCM/010	Screen	3,00,000	60	28.84	---
HCM/010	Day 1	5,000,000	47	12.31	998.1
HCM/010	Day 2/24hr.	---	---	---	---
HCM/010	Day 3	5,100,000	52	22.56	1336.67
HCM/010	Day 8	5,100,000	50	18.6	---
HCM/010	Day 15	5,300,000	49	30	1336.67
HCM/010	Day 22	---	49	47.08	---
HCM/010	Day 29	3,000,000	57	50	1524.76
HCM/010	Day 43	---	45	246	---
HCM/010	Day 57	4,300,000	59	16.67	---
HCM/010	Day 71	---	---	15.26	---
HCM/010	Day 85	---	---	---	---
HCM/010	Day 113	---	---	---	---
HCM/010	Day 169	---	---	---	---
CLR/011	Screen	12,000,000	58	10.00	---
CLR/011	Day 1	19,000,000	66	30.00	960.48
CLR/011	Day 3	28,000,000	55	11.05	922.86
CLR/011	Day 8	>5,000,000	55	12.46	---
CLR/011	Day 15	23,000,000	63	12.46	1035.71
CLR/011	Day 22	---	65	19.82	---
CLR/011	Day 29	13,000,000	58	10.00	998.1
CLR/011	Day 43	---	63	36.00	---
CLR/011	Day 57	18,000,000	61	20.80	---
CLR/011	Day 71	---	---	10.00	---
CLR/011	Day 85	---	---	---	---
CLR/011	Day 113	---	---	---	---
CLR/011	Day 169	---	---	---	---

EXAMPLE 5Orally-Administered OvIFN τ Blocks Development of
Experimental Allergic Encephalomyelitis

[0138] Recipient New Zealand White (NZW) mice received OvIFN τ (10^5 U/ml) by either i.p. injection or oral feeding 48 hours prior to, on the day of, and 48 hours after immunization with bovine myelin basic protein (bMBP) for induction of experimental allergic encephalomyelitis (EAE). 10^5 U of IFN τ were mixed with PBS to a total volume of 100 μ L and administered using a feeding tube placed down the esophagus and into the stomach. The dilution of the IFN τ in phosphate buffered saline was done immediately before administration.

[0139] For induction of EAE in NZW mice, 300 μ g of bovine myelin basic protein (bMBP) was emulsified in complete Freund's adjuvant (CFA) containing 8 mg/mL of H37Ra (Mycobacterium tuberculosis, Difco, Detroit, MI) and injected on either side of the base of the tail. On the day of immunization and 48 hours later, 400 ng of Pertussis toxin (List Biologicals, Campbell, CA) was also injected. For induction of EAE in SJL/J mice, the same protocol was used as described except mice were immunized again 7 days after the initial immunization. Mice were examined daily for signs of EAE and severity of disease was graded on the following scale:

SCORE	SYMPTOM/SEVERITY
1	loss of tail tone
2	hind limb weakness
3	paraparesis
4	paraplegia
5	moribund/death

[0140] To determine whether prevention of EAE was specific to OvIFN τ treatment, an anti-OvIFN τ monoclonal antibody (mAb), HL127, was used to neutralize OvIFN τ ability to block EAE (antibody HL127, directed against amino acid residues 139-172 of SEQ ID NO:2, neutralizes the antiviral activity of OvIFN τ in an antiviral assay using the MDBK cell line). A 1:10 dilution of HL127 was incubated for 2 hours with OvIFN τ prior to administration by either i.p. injection or oral feeding. Antibodies directed against IFN τ antigens, may be generated using the information herein combined with known techniques for antibody production

(e.g., Harlow, E., *et al.* in ANTIBODIES: A LABORATORY MANUAL, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, Cold Spring Harbor, NY (1988)).

[0141] The results are shown in Table 6, below. Both oral feeding and i.p. injection of OvIFN τ protected against acute induction of EAE. None of the animals that received IFN τ via i.p. injection developed symptoms of EAE, while of the animals that received IFN τ orally, 7 of 9 (78%) were protected. Anti-OvIFN τ antibody HL127 was effective at partially neutralizing the ability of the OvIFN τ to block EAE. These data indicate that orally-administered IFN τ is effective as a treatment in an animal model of multiple sclerosis.

Table 6
Effect of Orally Administered IFN τ on Onset and Severity
of Acute EAE in Mice

ROUTE OF ADMINISTRATION	TREATMENT	DISEASE INCIDENCE	MEAN DAY OF ONSET	MEAN SEVERITY
i.p.	saline	4/4	24.8 \pm 2.1	2.5 \pm 0
i.p.	OvIFN τ	0/4	--	--
i.p.	OvIFN τ + HL127Ab	3/4	20.7 \pm 1.2	2.3 \pm 0.6
oral	saline	7/9	22.0 \pm 1.0	2.7 \pm 0.6
oral	OvIFN τ	2/9	19	3
oral	OvIFN τ + HL127Ab	5/8	20.7 \pm 0.6	3 \pm 0

OvIFN τ (10^5 U) was administered 48 hours prior to MBP immunization, on the day of MBP immunization and 48 hours after MBP immunization by either i.p. injection or oral feeding. HL127, a monoclonal antibody specific for OvIFN τ , was incubated with OvIFN τ for two hours prior to administration.

EXAMPLE 6

Detection of OvIFN τ in Sera Following Oral Administration

[0142] The amount of OvIFN τ detectable in the sera of mice (treated as above) was compared over time after oral feeding or i.p. injection of OvIFN τ . Mice were administered 3×10^5 U of OvIFN τ and bled at 0.5, 2, 4, 6, 24 and 48 hours following IFN τ administration. Sera were tested in a cytopathic effect (viral plaque) assay (Familetti, P.C. *et al.*, *Meth. Enzymol.* 78:387 (1981)) to determine the amount of IFN τ in the samples.

[0143] Briefly, dilutions of IFN τ were added to MDBK cells grown to confluency in a flat bottom 96 well plate and incubated for 18 to 24 hours at 37°C. Vesicular stomatitis virus (VSV) was added to the plate for 45 minutes at room temperature. Virus was removed and methyl cellulose was added and the plate incubated for 48 hours at 37°C. After removal of methyl cellulose, the plate was stained with crystal violet for visualization of plaques. For measurement of IFN neutralization, OvIFN τ at a concentration of 500 U/mL was incubated for 1 hour at 37°C with either sera or HL127 (a monoclonal antibody specific for OvIFN τ). One antiviral unit caused a 50% reduction in destruction of the monolayer, relative to untreated MDBK cells infected with VSV (control plates). All samples were assayed simultaneously to eliminate interassay variability.

[0144] As shown in Fig. 9, OvIFN τ was detected at 0.5 hour and 2 hours after oral feeding (filled bars) at levels of 200 U/mL. By comparison, somewhat higher levels of OvIFN τ were detected for over a 24 hour period of time after i.p. injection (open bars). These data show that the above dose of IFN τ can be detected in serum for about two hours following oral administration.

EXAMPLE 7

Prevention of Chronic Relapse of Experimental Allergic Encephalomyelitis by Orally-Administered OvIFN τ

[0145] The ability of OvIFN τ to prevent paralysis was examined using a chronic-relapsing model of EAE, in which SJL mice immunized with MBP develop a chronic form of the disease where the appearance of symptoms occurs in a relapsing-remitting manner (Zamvil, S.S. *et al.*, *Ann. Rev. Immunol.* 8:579-621 (1990)).

[0146] EAE was induced in SJL mice essentially as described above. The mice were treated with 10⁵ U of IFN τ by either i.p. injection or oral feeding on the day of immunization (day 0) and every 48 hours thereafter for the duration of the experiment. The results are presented in Fig. 10A, SJL mice which were immunized with MBP but did not receive IFN τ treatment developed chronic relapsing paralysis with a 5/5 incidence of disease, with a peak mean severity of ~2.5 occurring 14 days after the start of the experiment. In contrast, treatment with OvIFN τ by either i.p. injection or oral feeding (Figs. 10B and 10C, respectively)

resulted in protection from EAE. Incidence of disease in both IFN τ treatment groups was reduced to 1/5 animals, with a mean severity of ~1.0. These data indicate that oral administration of IFN τ can block the development of chronic relapsing EAE, and suggest that orally-administered IFN τ may be as effective as i.p. injection when the IFN τ is fed about every 48 hours over an extended period of time.

EXAMPLE 8

Histological Analysis

[0147] Histological analyses were performed to determine the extent of lymphocyte infiltration into the CNS of MBP-immunized mice treated with OvIFN τ by oral and i.p. routes.

[0148] Mice were perfused with 4% paraformaldehyde, vertebral columns were removed and treated with formalin for 2 to 3 days. Spinal cords were dissected out and soaked in 0.5 % sucrose overnight at 4°C. Spinal cord sections were embedded and sections cut in a microtome. Sections were fixed to slides in 4 % paraformaldehyde and stained with cresyl violet for visualization of inflammatory infiltrates.

[0149] The results are shown in Figs. 11A-11C at a final magnification of 222 \times . Lymphocytic lesions were present in control spinal cord white matter (Fig. 11A). In contrast, no lymphocytic infiltrates were detected in mice treated with OvIFN τ by i.p. injection (Fig. 11B) or oral feeding (Fig. 11C). These data suggest that the protective effect of IFN τ is associated with inhibition of lymphocyte infiltration of the CNS.

EXAMPLE 9

Induction of IL-10 by Treatment with OvIFN τ

[0150] During the course of OvIFN τ treatment of SJL for prevention of chronic relapsing EAE, mice were bled and sera were examined for the presence of interleukin 10 (IL-10). Sera from mice which received either a single IFN τ (10^5 U) treatment (by i.p. injection or oral feeding), prolonged IFN τ (10^5 U) treatment (by i.p. injection or oral treatment for greater than 20 days) or no treatment were examined for IL-10 by enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) using IL-10 ELISA kits (Genzyme, Cambridge, MA) following the manufacturer's instructions.

All sera samples were tested in duplicate.

[0151] The results are shown in Fig. 12. No IL-10 was detected in control mice or in mice which received a single treatment of OvIFN τ by either i.p. injection or oral feeding. In contrast, SJL mice which received OvIFN τ by either i.p. injection or oral feeding every 48 hours for greater than 20 days had detectable levels of IL-10 in their sera. These data suggest that IFN τ -induced production of IL-10 may be a contributing mechanism by which OvIFN τ prevents development of EAE.

EXAMPLE 10

Cessation of Treatment with OvIFN τ Results in Relapsing Paralysis

[0152] SJL mice which were protected from EAE by OvIFN τ treatment via i.p. injection or oral feeding (every 48 hours) were followed for 58 days, during which time no disease development was observed. Treatment with OvIFN τ was then removed and the mice were observed for an additional 22 days for symptoms of disease.

[0153] The results are shown in Figure 13. IFN τ treatment is denoted as plus signs and removal of IFN τ treatment is denoted as minus signs beneath the graph. Disease incidence in each treatment group was as follows: PBS control=3/4 (square); i.p. injection=3/3 (triangle); oral feeding=3/4 (circle).

[0154] Both groups of mice which had previously been protected from EAE by OvIFN τ treatment developed signs of paralysis 6 to 12 days after removal of the OvIFN τ treatment. These data indicate that ongoing administration of IFN τ , by either i.p. injection or oral feeding, is desirable for continued protection from EAE in the chronic-relapsing model of EAE.

EXAMPLE 11

Oral Administration of OvIFN τ Reduces Anti-OvIFN τ Antibody Response

[0155] After removal of OvIFN τ treatment in the experiments described in Example 10, above, mice from each treatment group were bled and sera were examined for the presence of anti-OvIFN τ antibodies (Ab).

[0156] The antigen, OvIFN τ , was adsorbed to the flat bottoms of plastic tissue culture wells overnight at a concentration of 600 ng/well, and subsequently evaporated to dryness. The plates were treated with 5% milk (Carnation) in PBS

for 2 hours in order to block nonspecific binding and then washed 3 times with PBS containing 0.05% Tween 20. Various dilutions of sera from mice which were untreated, OvIFN τ treated by i.p. injection, and OvIFN τ treated by oral feeding were added and incubated for 3 hours. Binding was assessed with goat anti-mouse immunoglobulin coupled to horseradish peroxidase. Color development was monitored at 492 nm in an ELISA plate reader (Bio-Rad, Richmond, CA) after o-phenylenediamine and H₂O₂ were added and the reaction terminated with 2M H₂SO₄.

[0157] Exemplary results are shown in Fig. 14. Sera from untreated, OvIFN τ treated-i.p. injected and OvIFN τ treated-orally fed (2 mice/group) were examined by ELISA using multiple dilutions, including 1:30 (open bars) and 1:120 (filled bars). Mice which received OvIFN τ by oral feeding exhibited minimal antibody levels while mice which received OvIFN τ by i.p. injection exhibited elevated levels of anti-OvIFN τ Ab. As expected, mice which received no OvIFN τ treatment displayed no anti-OvIFN τ Ab.

[0158] Sera were also examined for their ability to neutralize OvIFN τ antiviral activity on MDBK cells as described above. The results are shown in Table 7, below. None of the sera from either i.p. injected or orally fed mice possessed neutralizing activity. These data suggest that oral treatment with IFN τ circumvents the antibody response directed against OvIFN τ protein observed in i.p. injection-treated individuals, and that neither treatment typically results in the generation of neutralizing antibodies.

Table 7
Sera OvIFN τ Titer in Mice Treated with OvIFN τ

500 U/ML OF OvIFN τ CO-CULTURED WITH SERA FROM:	OvIFN τ TITER (U/ML)
untreated	500
i.p. injected	500
orally fed	500
HL127	<50

[0159] Although the invention has been described with respect to particular embodiments, it will be apparent to those skilled in the art that various changes and modifications can be made without departing from the invention.